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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 BAGHDAD 001795

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: VOTE ON MINISTERIAL NOMINEES DELAYED -- AGAIN

REF: BAGHDAD 1553

Classified By: Classified by Acting Political Counselor Robert Gilchrist, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: The Prime Minister's poorly coordinated effort to gain parliamentary approval for a new slate of six ministers -- five of which are different from those proposed May 10 (reftel) -- has yet to reach fruition. The proposed Ministers of Health, Agriculture, and Transportation; along with Ministers of State for Civil Society, Provincial, and Tourism and Antiquities Affairs, are in the PM's words "technocrats" without party affiliation. We know little about the candidates, whose biographic information has been circulating in the CoR since May 24 without a formal hearing. In spite of the issue being on the agenda on May 24, 27, and 28, no vote had been taken when the CoR adjourned until June ¶5. The PM has yet to reveal his plans for replacing other ministers, although he told the CoR he sought recommendations from the various political blocs. Biographic information on the six nominees is included in paragraph seven. End summary.

A Cumbersome and Ill-Coordinated Process

¶2. (C) Prime Minister Maliki visited the Council of Representatives (CoR) May 24 to present the names of six new ministers to replace those withdrawn by the Sadrist bloc in April. With the six nominees in tow (there was no nominee for Minister of Justice, which had been included in the May 10 group), the PM made a brief speech about how the Sadr withdrawal offered the chance to put technocrats into these positions. He said he had searched out independent persons not beholden to political parties (but "not having bad relations with the parties" either) and made selections based on "democracy and professionalism." In the ensuing discussion, many CoR members called for more time to review background on the nominees before being asked to vote; the PM had requested a vote that same day. Two of the nominees took the stand in turn to present their professional credentials, but were frequently interrupted by "points of order" and distracting comments from the floor. In the end, the session was terminated (nominally due to lack of a quorum in the CoR as the session wore on) and the PM was invited back three days later.

¶3. (C) Returning to the CoR for the same purpose on May 27, well after the session started, the PM's plans were again disrupted by political maneuvering and the absence of a quorum as many members had already departed the assembly hall. The PM waited in the lobby while the CoR counted heads to determine whether it had a quorum or not (by our count it clearly did not). The Speaker called for one more try on May 28, without even inviting the PM into the assembly hall. (Comment: The confusion inherent in these delays is indication of the poor coordination between the PM and the CoR on the nominees, which is characteristic of other issues as well. It is unclear whether the PM even consulted bloc leaders to help grease the skids for a successful nomination

process. End comment.)

¶4. (C) Many CoR members question the credibility of the nominees, none of whom are very well known, partially due to skepticism of the nomination process. The overall mood seems to be: "Better candidates than before? Maybe. Good enough? Not certain." There is a sense that Maliki coordinated more broadly within the Shia coalition, but not likely outside of it -- leaving the impression that the selections may still be Dawa-centric. Many still question the status of the former ministers who "resigned" as well, raising questions as to whether their resignations need CoR endorsement -- or whether they were in fact fired.

CoR also Wants PM to Discuss Security

¶5. (C) The PM told the CoR May 24 that nominees for other ministries (Justice and possibly other portfolios) could not be determined until he received input from the various political bloc leaders. Whether he might include a change at the Ministry of Defense will be a closely watched issue by the Sunni community. In his May 24 introduction of the new ministers he also deflected CoR demands for testimony from the PM and his security-related ministers, essentially delaying a response to intense CoR interest in grilling the GoI on security. CoR angst over that delay is yet another sore spot between the executive and legislative branches that have again shown their inability to coordinate on a key issue facing the nation. (The CoR reportedly has 13 outstanding requests for ministers to testify, many of which are security related.)

Try Again?

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¶6. (C) A quorum was assembled May 28 as the CoR session began, and ministerial changes were on top of the agenda. Without explanation, the session took up the issue of CoR security. There was no indication that the PM had any plan to attend, although some of the ministerial nominees were reportedly in the building. The nominations were not discussed and the session closed with an announcement that the CoR will next meet on Tuesday, June 5.

The Nominees -- Bio Information

¶7. (SBU) Following are informal translations of biographic information provided by the PM as he made his May 24 presentation to the CoR. While some data had reportedly been shared in advance of that date, the full package of bios was not made available to the CoR with sufficient lead time to accommodate a careful review, contributing to the subsequent delay in voting.

Minister of Health: Dr. Sabah Rassol Sadiq Fakhr al-Din

From Najaf (al-Sa'ad District), Dr. Sabah was born July 1, 1952 and is married with four children. Stated accomplishments include establishment of the National Mental Health Board in Iraq which worked with the Ministries of Health, Higher Education, Labor and Social Affairs, Interior, and Human Rights. He spent time in the Directorate of Health Services in Kent (southeast Britain) which provides health service to 2.5 million people. He has held positions as Consultant and Professor of psychological medicine (1985-99), Director of Psychological Medicine services (1999-2002), Director-General of Health Services (2002-07), and Professor at Baghdad University (since the beginning of 2004).

An advisor on national mental health at the Iraqi Ministry of

Health since 2004 and an adviser of the World Health Organization since 2003, he is a member of Iraqi Medical Specialties Organization, the Arab Board of Examiners, and the Council of Iraqi Affairs in the British Royal College.

Dr. Sabah also has administrative experience in the planning and development of health services in the north-west of Britain, as Chairman of the Planning Health Services Commission (1985-88), as Secretary of the Central Mental Health Commission of South Britain, and Deputy Chairman of the Commission of Advisers (1988-92). He was head of the Mental Health Department in the southern region of Saudi Arabia, planning and developing services for the region, and Visiting Professor at Abha University (1992-96)

He has taken courses in Effective Health Leadership (British Administrative Assembly, 1985 and 1988), Health Economy (Aberdeen University, 1986-87), Consultants' Course (British Administration College, 1990-91), and World Course for leaders (Birmingham University, 2003-07). He was an Assistant Professor at Liverpool University (1985-88) and has been a professor at London University (1988-93), the College of Medicine at Abha University (1992-96), and at Kent University (since 2000). His long list of articles includes topics of disability and mental health, drug treatments for personal disorders, treatment of Epilepsy, issues of the handicapped and psychologically stressed in Saudi Arabia, and psychological health in Iraq.

Minister of Agriculture: Dr. Ali Hussein Al- Bahadili

Born in Iraq in 1943, Dr. Ali is a professor of plant diseases at Baghdad University's College of Agriculture and served as the Minister of Agriculture during the transitional period in Iraq (2005-06). He was head of Agricultural Consultants and a member of the Iraqi Agricultural Engineers, Syndicate. He has a PhD in plant diseases (University of California-Davis, 1975), an MS in plant diseases (Baghdad University, 1970), and a BS in Agricultural Sciences (Baghdad University, 1965).

A member of the American Plant Disease Association, the Plant Disease Association for Mediterranean countries, the Sigma Association for American Sciences, and a number of Arab and Iraqi associations and scientific councils, Dr. Ali has participated in conferences on plant protection and diseases in the U.S., Germany, Greece, and the Arab region. Publications and patents in his name are also plentiful. He has pursued academic activities in Algeria (1981-84), Jordan (1995-2004), and Germany.

Minister of Transportation: Amer Abd al-Jabbar Ismael

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Born in Basra in 1962, Mr. Ismael is an expert engineer serving as Director General of Gas Filling Company at the Ministry of Oil. His appointment at the Ministry began in 1986. With a Bachelor's degree in Naval Engineering (from the Arab Gulf Academy for Sea Studies, 1986), he continued studying to earn a certificate as naval chief of engineers (1996) and 20 other certificates in the fields of naval transport of oil, gas and other goods. He is a member of the Iraqi Engineers Society.

Having worked in the State Enterprise for Iraqi Oil Tankers, Arab Enterprise for Iraqi Oil Tankers, Uni-Mass Naval Company for transporting Oil, Syrian-Italian Rimar Company for Naval transportation, and as Director General in the State Organization for Distribution of Oil Products, he is currently the Director General of the Gas Filling Cylinders Company. A political independent, he claims that his family opposed the regime of Ahmed Hassan Al-Baker before the regime of Saddam Hussein and participated in the 1991 uprising

before leaving Iraq as a political refugee in Syria; he returned after the fall of the regime.

Minister of State for Civil Society Affairs:
Dr. Thamer Jaafar Mohammad Al Zubeidi

Born in 1957, Dr. Thamer is married. He has three degrees in statistics (Doctorate from the University of Baghdad in 1999, Masters from Mustansariyah University in 1990, and Bachelors from Mustansariyah University in 1980). He has 15 years work experience as an Assistant Professor in Accounting, Information Technology, and in pursuing various educational science duties. He is currently Assistant Dean for Student Affairs at the Technical Management College.

Dr. Thamer's technical credentials include multiple publications on estimates/statistics (2003), on population growth (2002), on regression analysis (2001 and 1994), a study on causes of delay of banking transactions, and logarithmic samples (1995). His CV gives no indication of time spent overseas or political affiliation

Minister of State for Provincial Affairs:
Mrs. (Dr.) Kholood Sami Azzara Al-Maajoun

Born in Samawa on February 28, 1950, Dr. Kholood is an Iraqi national married with three children. Among her studies in the judicial field, she earned a PhD in Law in 1984 (university not stated) following a Diploma of Higher Studies in law (1976) and a Diploma in Criminal Sciences (1977) from Cairo University. She has a Bachelors degree (1972) from Baghdad University. Teaching experience includes a term on the faculty of King Saud University in Saudi Arabia (1984-94). Administratively, she worked as a rapporteur of the Law Department at the College of Administrative Sciences (Saudi Arabia, 1988-94). She became an affiliate professor in 1994.

Dr. Kholood claims to speak English and has participated in several programs implemented by the women,s department in the center for serving society. (Note: Her father is a tribal leader who was a member of the previous transitional legislature but lost a bid for a seat in the CoR. He follows conservative Islamic tradition but has credentials as a lawyer and reportedly maintains a house in London; he keeps close ties with the ruling elite in the International Zone. End note.)

Minister of State for Tourism and Antiquities:
(Engineer) Zuhair Mohammed Ridha Sharba

Sharba is the only minister who was also on the May 10 list. Born in Najaf in 1948, he is a consultative engineer with a degree in engineering (Bachelors, Baghdad University, 1970-1972), a certificate in Military Sciences (Military College, Baghdad), and a certificate in Aviation Engineering from the Soviet Union in 1973.

Work experience includes his time as an officer in the Iraqi Air Force through July of 1981, when he retired on pension for political reasons (including the execution of two of his brothers and the detention of three others). Working in the private sector, he established several companies (Al-Jameea, Al-Izdihar and Dar-Alhandasa).

He has held the positions of Head of the al-Najaf al-Ashraf Chamber of Commerce, a member of the al-Najaf Provincial Council, head of the al-Najaf branch of the Iraqi Contractors Federation, and head of the Economic Committee in the

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Provincial Council, where he was also a member of the Projects and Investment Committees. He presided over and

participated in numerous delegations to local and international conferences and symposia regarding tourism, reconstruction of Iraq, and investment in different countries of the region (UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait, Jordan, Iran, Turkey and Egypt). (Note: One PRT contact suggests Sharba is a Ja'fari loyalist within Dawa. End note.)
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